

White-tailed Deer Management Plan Monocacy National Battlefield Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Deer Management Plan?

The purpose of the 2014 White-tailed Deer Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (plan/EIS) is to provide an effective deer management strategy that supports long-term protection, preservation, and restoration of native vegetation, wildlife and other natural and cultural resources in the battlefield, including viable crop yields for cooperating farmers. The secondary purpose of the plan/EIS is to provide a chronic wasting disease (CWD) response strategy that is fully integrated with deer management and that will reduce the probability of occurrence, promote early detection and reduce the probability of the spread of CWD.

How do I get a copy of the White-tailed Deer Management Plan/Final EIS?

The plan can be accessed via the National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=35457>

What is the problem with deer in the battlefield?

Deer eat a variety of plants, including young trees. The over-population of White-tailed deer on the battlefield has caused harm to the resources by limiting forest regeneration and structure in the forest canopy. This has created an “unhealthy” forest where invasive exotic species thrive, which has a negative effect on bird populations and other wildlife species.

Agricultural crop yields on the battlefield are impacted by browsing from over abundant deer. This has created a hardship for our Cooperators and could result in the loss of active agriculture in the park. Changing management practices from crops to hay fields would be contrary to our legislation and park goals to maintain the historic battlefield appearance.

Vehicle collisions along Interstate 270, Maryland Route 355, and county roads are also a concern for visitor and public safety.

How many deer are there in Monocacy National Battlefield?

Deer population density surveys conducted by park staff in the fall of 2015 determined that there were approximately 170 deer per square mile or approximately 365 deer on the battlefield.

What does the NPS think is the right number of deer for Monocacy National Battlefield?

The goal is population density of 15-20 deer per square mile, or 30-45 deer on the 2.12 square mile battlefield. This number was determined by a team of scientists and specialists from a variety of state and federal agencies. The target deer density for the park may change (up or down) based on the results of vegetation monitoring in battlefield forests and crop yield monitoring on agricultural lands. It may take six or more years for vegetation growth to recover to the point where plant regeneration is sustainable.

What is the selected alternative and what management actions are included?

The selected alternative from the plan/EIS (Alternative D) incorporates lethal and nonlethal actions to reduce and then maintain the deer population at a level in the battlefield that protects native plant communities, promotes forest regeneration and habitat, and allows for successful crop production to maintain the historic scene.

Lethal reduction via sharpshooting will be used to quickly reduce the deer population and achieve the initial deer density goal. It is anticipated that it will take two to three years of deer management actions to reach the target deer density. Deer density and vegetation growth will be monitored annually and reduction will take place as needed to maintain the desired density.

Why not use reproductive control agents?

For a control agent to be acceptable, NPS has established that it must:

- Be federally approved for application to free ranging populations.
- Provide multi-year efficacy (3-5yrs.)
- Would leave no hormonal residue in meat.
- Result in acceptable levels of reduction.

At this time, no acceptable and effective reproductive control agents are available.

Why is chronic wasting disease (CWD) included as part of the deer management plan?

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was included as part of this plan, as the battlefield lies within a 60 mile radius of known CWD cases. The park has an approved Environmental Assessment (EA) for dealing with this disease if it should move near or within the battlefield boundary. The EA was written and included in this plan/EIS to work in conjunction with the State of Maryland's efforts in controlling the spread of this disease among the deer population. There is currently no evidence that CWD is transmissible to humans or domestic livestock. The park will test deer prior to donation to food banks.

Was the public involved in the decision-making process for the Deer Management Plan?

Yes, two public meetings were held during the development of the plan/EIS. Public comments were taken and considered in the preparation of the plan/EIS. Comments and responses to them are included in the document.

Is the decision final?

Yes, the NPS selected a final deer management alternative and the decision is final. The Record of Decision documents NPS approval of the plan, selects the alternative to be implemented, and sets forth stipulations required for implementation. It was signed by the NPS National Capital Regional Director in the summer of 2014.

When is the park planning to implement the deer management plan?

The battlefield plans on implementing its first year of deer management between December 2016 and March 2017.

Will the NPS provide more specific information on when and where deer management activities are taking place?

To make this action as safe as possible for park visitors, neighbors and staff, we will share specific information on these actions with local law enforcement and other state and local officials to ensure coordination. The details of implementation – including what, when and where actions on the ground will take place – will not be provided to the public.

How does the NPS make sure the public is safe? Who is conducting the action?

The battlefield's top priority is the safety of visitors, neighbors and staff. Extensive safety measures will be put in place to ensure a safe, humane and successful operation. It is critical to public safety that only qualified and experienced personnel conduct all lethal activities. Therefore, the NPS will work with specially trained biologists from the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-WS). The USDA-WS have a long history of conducting safe and effective actions to reduce wildlife populations in both rural and urban areas. Safety measures will include:

- Conduct lethal reduction activities when visitation is low and close affected areas to the public during day-time operations;
- Conduct all activities involving firearms in compliance with federal firearms laws administered by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives;
- Prohibit lethal reduction activities from taking place within established safety zones along the park boundary, open roadways and occupied buildings;
- Conduct shooting actions from an elevated position, such as a hilltop or a truck bed, and with earthen backstops when possible;
- Use specialized ammunition that does not contain lead; and
- Position NPS personnel to patrol the battlefield during removal actions to ensure compliance with park closures and public safety measures and accompany USDA-WS teams in the field.

Is the meat being donated?

Yes, the meat will be donated to local food banks and other organizations, consistent with NPS public health guidelines.

Why don't you allow hunting at the battlefield to control the deer population?

Hunting is not allowed in a national park unless it is specifically authorized in the legislation that established the park or by any subsequent law. Public hunting at Monocacy National Battlefield would be inconsistent with existing laws, policies, and regulations for the battlefield.

Once the deer population inside the battlefield is reduced, won't deer move into the battlefield from surrounding areas and remaining deer simply reproduce more?

The plan/EIS is intended to guide long-term management of white-tailed deer in the battlefield. While the reproductive rate of deer may increase in response to a decrease in the overall population and some deer may move into the park from the surrounding area, future deer removal actions would take into consideration any population growth and adjust management actions as needed through the adaptive management process.

I love seeing the deer. Will I still be able to see deer when I'm at the battlefield?

This management plan does not eliminate deer from Monocacy National Battlefield. Rather, it is designed to bring the deer population to a level that allows the park's forests to regenerate and the crops fields to be productive to maintain the historic battlefield landscape. White-tailed deer are part of the ecosystem and future generations of park visitors will continue to have the opportunity to see deer on the battlefield.

Are there other National Park Service areas that are doing deer management?

Yes, in the eastern half of the United States there are a number of National Park Service areas that are actively performing deer management: Gettysburg National Military Park, Catoclin Mountain Park, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Rock Creek Park, and Valley Forge National Historical Park. Antietam National Battlefield plans to implement deer management this coming fall and winter.

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?

Please contact our staff at mono_superintendent@nps.gov